

From: Rick Wood [mailto:rlw895@sbcglobal.net]
Sent: Saturday, May 22, 2010 12:31 PM
To: Isenberg, Phil@DeltaCouncil
Subject: "Less than 25 pages" (way less)

Phil,

I promised to send you a brief summary of the "radical idea" I suggested at the California Water Law conference May 20--no PowerPoint, and less than 25 pages. Here goes!

This idea goes both to the financing and political acceptability of a new state water plan, of which the Delta Plan will be an important part.

If we are going to have a sustainable state water plan, we will need to live within a water budget, and to do that, we are going to need to make some statewide decisions about land use that are more-or-less permanent. The most important of those decisions will have to do with our commitment, as a state, to irrigated agriculture, especially in the San Joaquin Valley.

It will be difficult for agriculture that depends on imported Delta water to pay the costs of any "Delta fix." But this may be because we don't view California agriculture as of broad a benefit as we should.

As a northern California urbanite, I have considered whether I would commit water (and money) to support urban southern California vs. to preserve agriculture in the San Joaquin Valley. I find it makes a big difference where "my" water (and money) is going. I won't go into all the reasons why, but I think if we polled California urbanites from *throughout* the state, we would find I'm far from alone.

Certainly a farm is a commercial business enterprise (and possibly also a desired way of life) to the farmer, and he/she is a direct beneficiary of a reliable irrigation water supply. The farmer should pay something for that.

But I'm willing to help pay for that reliable irrigation water too, in a substantial way, provided the following three conditions (for the reasons stated) are met (note I'm not distinguishing between family and a corporate agriculture here; it's the land that matters):

First, by some objectively applied standard, the lands I'm supporting are considered lands of national or statewide significance due to their soil, location, configuration, and growing season (i.e., lands that can, given water, grow lots of good stuff). I want my support (and sacrifice) to go to "important" agricultural lands, lands that provide some sort of "resource security" for the nation and also are part of what makes my home distinctive--part of what makes me proud to be a Californian.

Second, the lands are and will be managed properly, for both water and soil conservation. That means cost-effective "best management practices" need to be defined and applied. I want my support to go to sustainable (don't read that necessarily as "organic")

agriculture. (This rules out water for lands with irresolvable drainage problems and probably also lands where those problems can be resolved, but only at great transferred cost.)

Third--and this is critical--there is a guarantee that the lands will be agricultural in perpetuity. That means some form of conservation easement. I am not interested in supporting agricultural land that is merely in a temporary state awaiting urbanization. That is a major part of the *quid pro quo* for the adequate, reliable water supply I am willing to help provide.

This third condition also implies cities among the supported agricultural lands would be willing to accept physical limits on their growth (i.e., some form of ultimate urban limit line where a city abuts the agricultural lands). I think they would if the requirement were presented as part of comprehensive plan. Further, urbanites like me today not only increasingly recognize that agricultural lands can have a benefit beyond simply a commercial agricultural value to the grower/landowner; we recognize the benefit is even greater to us if the lands are close by. I think my home town of Fairfield is setting a good example at the moment (see Suisun Valley), as is Solano County, but it needs to go statewide (just like Putah Creek;-)).

I hope that was “short and sweet” enough. Thanks for asking. I will also figure out how to post this idea on the DSC web page if you like. Communication and engagement with urbanites like me will be essential to building the “critical mass” necessary to “get the jump on” and overcome opposition that will form around any financing proposal, especially one that also involves land use commitments.

Best wishes.

Rick Wood